
GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ANTHRAX

1) WHY AM I HERE TODAY?

A worker at your facility has been diagnosed with anthrax. The investigation of where this employee became exposed is ongoing. However, as a precaution, workers who worked in the same area of this employee have been contacted to come and have an evaluation as well as start a course of medication.

If you need more antibiotics you will be contacted after completing this short course of antibiotics.

Anthrax is an acute infectious disease caused by spore-forming bacteria found most commonly in hoofed animals--ranging from cattle to sheep to camels. Depending on the mode of exposure, anthrax in humans occurs in three forms: cutaneous, or through the skin; gastrointestinal, if it is ingested in contaminated food; or inhalation, if the spores are directly inhaled.

Of course what we are seeing lately, and the reason anthrax is suddenly in the news is that there have been several cases of intentional exposure to a powdered form of anthrax being sent through the mail. **Anthrax is not spread from person to person.**

2) WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE MEDICATION?

Medication taken now will help reduce your chance of developing symptoms from any anthrax exposure. **Please remember to take the medication as prescribed.**

3) WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF TREATMENT?

The drug you are receiving is generally well tolerated. Uncommon side effects include: rash, hives, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal discomfort, headache, and dizziness. **You must inform the health worker if you are taking medications for seizures or are on blood thinners (Coumadin) or Theophylline.**

4) HOW LONG SHOULD I TAKE THE MEDICATION?

Take all the tablets you have been given. A longer course of medication may be necessary if the test results are positive or certain symptoms develop. We will provide further information to you.



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5) SHOULD I BE WATCHING FOR ANY SYMPTOMS OF ANTHRAX?

Seek medical attention if you have:

1. A fever (temperature greater than 100 degrees F).
2. Respiratory symptoms such as persistent cough.
3. A sore, especially on your face, arms, or hands.

6) WHO SHOULD I CALL IF I HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

D.C. Department of Health at (202) 442-9196.

7) CAN I GO TO MY DOCTOR?

You should tell your doctor if you are already on medication. Seek medical advice if you have any symptoms or side effects.